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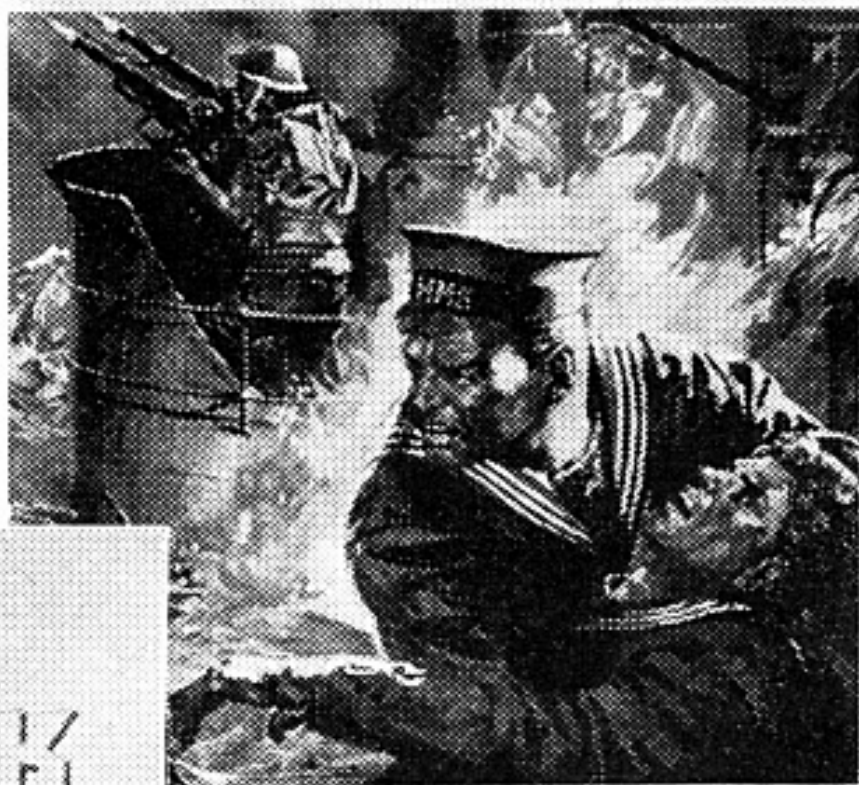
PARATROOP



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THE NAVY WAY



RAM—and WRECK



No. 13 THE NAVY WAY

There was salt water in the veins of the men who manned the transports and escorts on that hell-run to the besieged island of Malta.

No. 14 RAM—and WRECK

A gallant old destroyer snatched from the scrapheap and a hand-picked crew of volunteers—on a suicide mission to glory.

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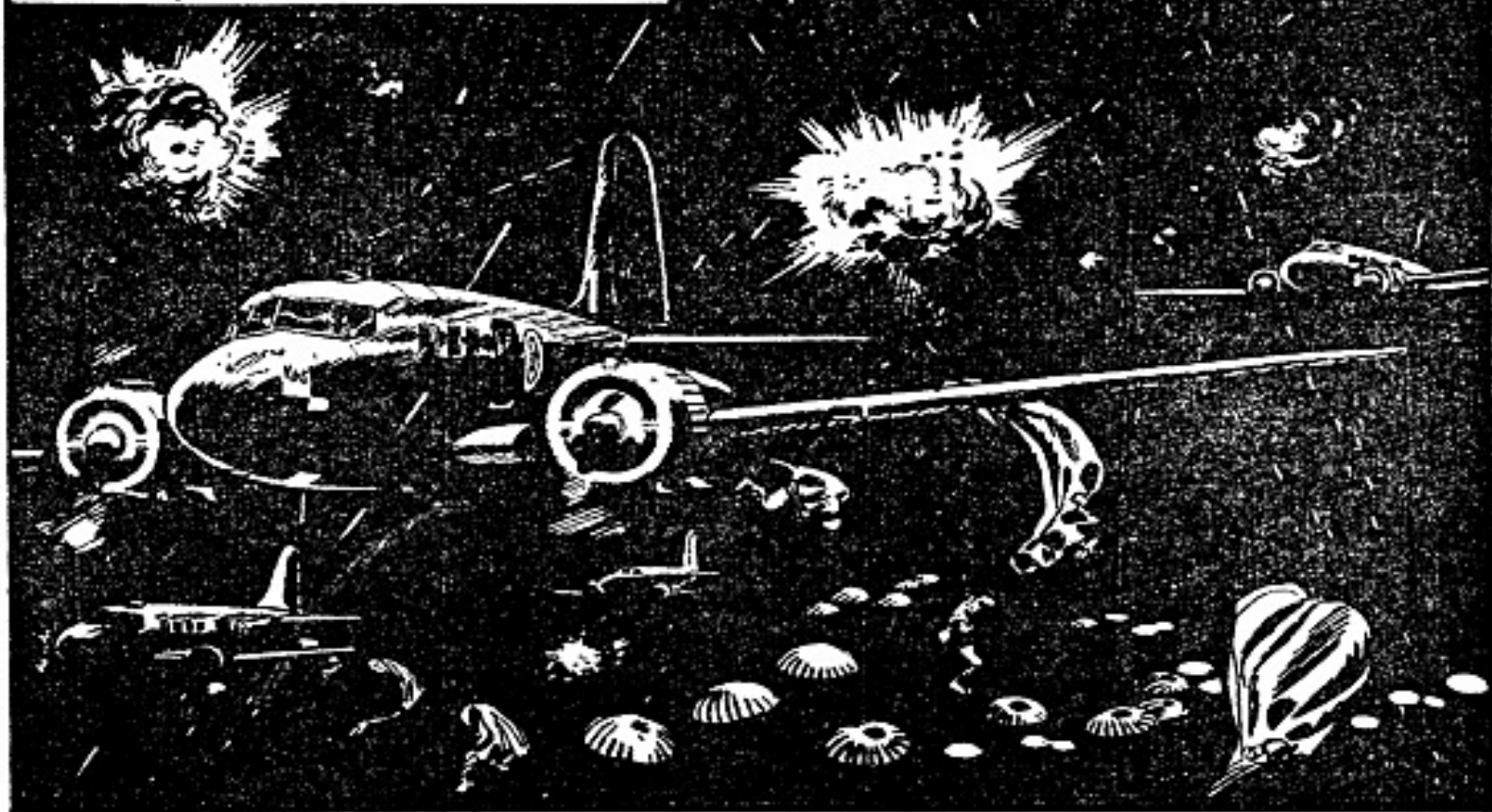
PARATROOP

MEN OF THE ARMY'S SPECIAL INVESTIGATION BRANCH HAVE A DOUBLE DUTY — THEY SERVE BOTH AS SOLDIERS AND DETECTIVES. WORKING UNDERCOVER, USING THEIR SKILL IN DETECTION EVEN DURING THE HEIGHT OF BATTLE, THESE MEN CRACKED MANY TOUGH CASES DURING WORLD WAR II. ONE OF THE TOUGHEST ON THE S.I.B.'S CLOSED FILES IS LISTED AS THE *PESCARA BULLION CASE*. IT WAS A CASE WHICH STARTED WITH LOOTING AND ENDED IN MURDER...



Chapter 1. Loot!

THE PESCARA BULLION CASE BEGAN WITH A PARATROOP RAID BEHIND THE GERMAN LINES IN ITALY IN FEBRUARY 1944.



THE PARATROOPERS WERE D COMPANY OF THE FOURTH BATTALION, 426 PARACHUTE REGIMENT. THEIR TARGET WAS GERMAN DIVISIONAL HEADQUARTERS ON THE PESCARA-LITORI FRONT:...

REGROUP, MEN!
WHERE ARE YOU,
SAR'NT?

HERE, SIR!
THREE PLATOON'S
UNDER FIRE. WE'LL
HAVE TO BASH ON
WITHOUT FLANK
SUPPORT...



TWO PLATOONS WENT BALDHEADED FOR THE ITALIAN FARMHOUSE WHICH WAS THE GERMAN HEADQUARTERS. THE SPEED OF THE ATTACK TOOK THE GERMANS BY SURPRISE.

ACHTUNG!
RED
DEVILS!

AAA-AGH!

THE OVERALL PLAN WAS TO PARALYSE THE NERVE-CENTRE OF THE GERMAN COMMAND, WHILE A MAJOR BRITISH OFFENSIVE WAS MOUNTED AGAINST THE FRONT LINE TWENTY MILES TO THE SOUTH...

PUSH ON,
MEN!

HERE...
DOSE THEM
WITH LEAD,
CORP...

THE INFANTRY REACHED PESCARA AT DUSK THAT DAY, AFTER A FAST ADVANCE THROUGH ENEMY OPPOSITION DISORGANISED BY THE CAPTURE OF ITS COMMAND HEADQUARTERS.

BULLDOG SIX
TO BULLDOG...
LINK-UP
EFFECTED!

WHAT-HO, CHAPS...
ANYTHING WE CAN
DO FOR YOU?

SEND A MESSAGE
TO BRIGADE H.Q., CAPTAIN.
TELL THEM WE'VE CAPTURED
A JERRY MAJOR-GENERAL.



TWO DAYS LATER, AT BRITISH MILITARY HEADQUARTERS IN NAPLES, THE GERMAN MAJOR-GENERAL, NAMED OTTO BERGMANN, WAS FORMALLY INTERROGATED...

YOU HAVE BEEN
MOST CO-OPERATIVE,
GENERAL, YOU HAVE
NOTHING FURTHER
TO ADD?

WHAT ELSE
IS THERE TO SAY?
YOU HAVE DESTROYED
MY HEADQUARTERS,
CAPTURED THE
GOLD...



THE GENERAL'S IMPRUDENT REMARK WAS THE FIRST THE BRITISH STAFF HAD HEARD OF THE PESCARA BULLION. THEY WERE QUICK TO TAKE ADVANTAGE...

TELL US ABOUT THE GOLD, GENERAL...

WE SALVAGED GOLD BARS FROM THE VAULTS OF THE BANK AT FOGGIA DURING THE NOVEMBER RETREAT. IT WAS BURIED UNDER THE SUPPLY DUMP AT PESCARA WHERE NO DOUBT YOUR PARATROOPERS FOUND IT...

NEXT DAY, THREE SENIOR BRITISH OFFICERS WENT TO PESCARA...

THE GOLD WAS HERE ALL RIGHT... ONE HUNDRED THOUSAND POUNDS WORTH ACCORDING TO BERGMANN.

NOW THERE ARE THREE BARS LEFT, AND NO-ONE FROM YOUR D COMPANY HAS REPORTED FINDING ANY GOLD, COLONEL FROST...

WHAT ARE YOU SUGGESTING, SIR?

COLONEL FROST, COMMANDING OFFICER OF THE 426 PARACHUTE REGIMENT, WAS MUCH DISTURBED BY THE BRIGADIER'S WORDS. THE THIRD OFFICER EXPLAINED...

THE GOLD WAS HERE WHEN YOUR D COMPANY RAIDED THE PLACE THREE DAYS AGO, COLONEL. IT'S NOT THERE NOW. ONE OR MORE OF YOUR MEN MUST HAVE DISCOVERED IT... AND LOOTED IT...



THE GOLD IS PROBABLY SALTED AWAY IN ENGLAND BY NOW. IT COULD HAVE BEEN STOWED IN THE MEN'S PACKS AND CARRIED BACK WITHOUT ATTRACTING NOTICE. BUT, NEVERTHELESS, THIS IS ROBBERY ON A BIG SCALE...

THIS IS A JOB FOR YOUR BRANCH, I THINK, COLONEL DICKSON...

THE PARATROOP COLONEL LOOKED SEARCHINGLY AT THE THIRD MAN...

YOUR BRANCH, COLONEL DICKSON?

THE SPECIAL INVESTIGATION BRANCH, COLONEL. WE SHALL DRAFT AN UNDERCOVER MAN INTO YOUR D COMPANY. HE WILL SERVE WITH YOUR MEN... WORK WITH THEM... FIGHT WITH THEM... BUT UNKNOWN TO THEM. HE WILL BE TRACKING DOWN THE MEN WE WANT...



Chapter 2. Roman Candle

FOUR MONTHS AFTER THE PESCARA RAID, D COMPANY OF THE 426 PARACHUTE REGIMENT FLEW INTO COMBAT AGAIN. THIS TIME, PRIVATE VOSPER FLEW WITH THEM...

FIFTEEN MINUTES TO GO, SERGEANT...

ACTION STATIONS, MEN...



PRIVATE VOSPER HAD JOINED THREE PLATOON A COUPLE OF MONTHS BEFORE AS A REPLACEMENT. HE WAS JUST AN ORDINARY PARATROOPER LIKE THE OTHERS, ONLY IN ADDITION TO HIS INTENSIVE PARACHUTE TRAINING, VOSPER HAD BEEN THROUGH THE SPECIAL INVESTIGATION BRANCH COURSE...

COR... I'M LOADED UP LIKE A PERISHING CHRISTMAS TREE, SARGE...

DON'T GRIPE, WEST... WHEN I WAS IN THE WEST HUNTSHIRES, WE CARRIED A THREE-INCH MORTAR BETWEEN TWO OF US BESIDES OUR EQUIPMENT.



VOSPER HAD SERVED WITH THESE MEN AND WORKED WITH THEM. NOW HE WAS GOING TO FIGHT WITH THEM. THE DATE WAS THE SIXTH OF JUNE 1944, D-DAY. THE DAKOTA WAS SIX HUNDRED FEET ABOVE NORMANDY.

GOOD
LUCK,
MEN!

OKAY,
NUMBER ONE—
GREEN LIGHT—
GO!

IN TWO MONTHS,
VOSPER HAD LEARNED
A LOT ABOUT THE MEN
OF THREE PLATOON, BUT
NOTHING ABOUT THE
LOOTED BULLION...

NUMBER
THREE, GO!
NUMBER
FOUR—

KEEP CLOSED
UP, MEN... STRAGGLERS
WON'T STAND A CHANCE
DOWN THERE...

FOR EVEN THE VETERAN PARATROOPER, THE MOMENT BEFORE THE DROP IS A TENSE ONE. THIS WAS VOSPER'S FIRST COMBAT JUMP AND HIS NERVES WERE SO RIGID THAT HE REMEMBERED NOTHING OF THOSE LAST SECONDS ...



AFTER FIFTY FEET, VOSPER FELT A SURPRISINGLY GENTLE TUG ON HIS SHOULDERS. THE PARACHUTE CANOPY HAD OPENED. HE GRINNED WITH SWEET RELIEF. IT WAS THEN THAT HE HEARD THE SCREAM...



THE MAN MUST HAVE JUMPED AFTER VOSPER. HE HURTTED PAST WITH HIS PARACHUTE STILL UNOPENED AND HIS SCREAMS WELLING FROM HIS THROAT, THICK WITH HORROR...

GOOD GRIEF!

AA-AAGH!

THE MEN STILL DRIFTING DOWN HEARD THE LAST SCREAM SNAP OFF SHORT AS THE WRITHING FIGURE THUDDERED TO THE GROUND.

HIS PACK NEVER OPENED, POOR BLOKE!

HIS STATIC-LINE MUST HAVE COME ADrift!

STOW THE TALK, MEN... WE'VE GOT WORK TO DO...

THERE WAS A SPANDAU HOISING THE DROPPING ZONE WITH SHORT FLAT BURSTS OF TRACER WHEN YOSPER TOUCHED DOWN. IT WAS ONLY FIFTEEN SECONDS SINCE HE HAD JUMPED FROM THE DAKOTA. HE WAS STILL CONFUSED...



THE GERMANS HAD A MACHINE-GUN EMPLACEMENT IN THE COPSE. THREE PLATOON HAD DROPPED INTO BATTLE AGAIN. DEATH WOULD COME WHOLESAL NOW...



THE BATTLE WAS ON. YET CLAMPING HIS STEN TOGETHER, VOSPER WAS CONCERNED ONLY WITH THE WASTEFUL DEATH OF ONE MAN...

HEY, SARGE,
THAT WAS NUMBER
SEVEN WHOSE 'CHUTE
DIDN'T OPEN -
TEDDY HALE!

HALE, EH...
THE WORRIED
ONE... MAYBE HE
HAD A REASON
TO BE WORRIED...



VOSPER BEGAN TO RUN DIAGONALLY ACROSS THE FIELD, TOO NEAR THE COPSE. SERGEANT BRISTOWE, KNEELING WITH THE LIEUTENANT BY THE MORTAR CREWS, SAW HIM AND GRUNTED...

SHAKE THEM
DOWN, MORTAR
CREWS. I DON'T
WANT THEM FIRING
WHEN WE MOVE
IN...

STONE ME!
WHAT'S THAT
MAN PLAYING
AT, SIR?



VOSPER WAS A DETECTIVE AS WELL AS A SOLDIER. AT THIS MOMENT, THOUGH THE SPANDAU HAD OPENED UP AGAIN AND THE TRACER WAS LICKING AT HIS HEELS, HE HAD HIS FIRST JOB IN MIND...

HERE,
YOU
THERE!

LEAVE HIM,
SERGEANT...
WE'LL CHECK LATER...
TWO AND FOUR
SECTIONS GET
READY...



VOSPER FOUND THE CRUMPLED BODY OF HALE. HE EXAMINED THE PARATROOPERS EQUIPMENT...

PACK UNOPENED...
WHAT ABOUT THE
STATIC LINE? YES,
IT'S BROKEN... NO,
NOT JUST BROKEN,
BY HECK!



VOSPER WAS TOO BUSY TO NOTICE THAT THE SPANDAU BATTLE HAD STOPPED. THE COMPANY HAD TAKEN THE COPSE. LIEUTENANT SIMS AND SERGEANT BRISTOWE, CURIOUS, HAD TRACKED VOSPER DOWN...

THERE
HE IS, SIR...

HE'S
LOOKING AT
HALE'S BODY...
COME ON, SERGEANT,
LET'S SEE WHO HE IS
AND WHAT HE'S
UP TO...



VOSPER HAD NO WARNING. SERGEANT BRISTOWE'S HAND SUDDENLY CLAMPED, HARD AND SUSPICIOUS, ON HIS SHOULDER.



VOSPER HAD WORKED UNDERCOVER BEFORE. IT WAS ONE OF THE OCCUPATIONAL HAZARDS OF THE UNDERCOVER MAN TO FIND HIMSELF UNDER SUSPICION. HE ADOPTED A WHINING VOICE...

I DIDN'T MEAN ANYTHING, SARGE... I SAW HIM HIT THE DECK... HE WAS MY PAL...

HALE WAS? FIRST I HEARD OF IT, VOSPER...

GOOD GRIEF! THIS STATIC LINE'S BEEN CUT THROUGH!



SOMEONE HACKED THROUGH THAT STATIC LINE BEFORE HALE JUMPED, SERGEANT.

LET ME LOOK, SIR...



LIEUTENANT SIM'S VOICE WAS FULL OF TENSION...



THIS WAS DELIBERATE,
BRUTAL MURDER,
SERGEANT.

HOLD HARD,
SIR... YOU'VE GOT
NO PROOF OF THAT..
IT MIGHT HAVE BEEN
A FAULTY LINE...

VOSPER HAD TURNED AWAY, BUT HE
KNEW THE LIEUTENANT WAS LOOKING
AT HIM...

WHAT MOTIVE WOULD
ANY OF THE LADS
HAVE FOR DOING
HALE IN - LEAST
OF ALL WHEN
WE'RE STILL
TANGLING
WITH THE
JERRIES?

WE'LL KEEP
THIS BUSINESS
TO OURSELVES FOR
THE TIME BEING,
SERGEANT. YOU AND
I... AND THE MURDERER,
EH, VOSPER?

ALL
RIGHT,
SIR.

VOSPER STOOD WITH HIS BACK TO THE
OFFICER AND THE N.C.O. AND THEIR HARD,
SUSPICIOUS EYES. HE WAS WORKING ON
THE PESCARA BULLION CASE...

YEAH...
THAT'S RIGHT,
SIR... I WAS
FORGETTING
VOSPER...

MOTIVE... YES...
AND HOW ABOUT
A HUNDRED THOUSAND
POUNDS WORTH OF
GOLD AS A MOTIVE
FOR MURDER...



Chapter 3. *The Frightened Man*

D COMPANY'S OBJECTIVE IN THE NORMANDY LANDING WAS THE BRIDGE OVER THE TREMS. THIS WAS TO BE SEIZED AND HELD UNTIL CONVENTIONAL FORCES COULD LINK UP WITH THE PARATROOPS AFTER THE SEABORNE LANDINGS...



TWO PLATOONS OF D COMPANY HAD OVERWHELMED THE STRONGPOINTS GUARDING THE BRIDGE AT THE FIRST ATTEMPT. BUT THE GERMANS HAD FRESH FORCES IN RESERVE AND BOLDLY THREW THEM INTO BATTLE ...



THE PARATROOPERS WITHDREW TO THE DYKE BEYOND THE RIVER ROAD, PUNCHING THROUGH THE GERMAN OFFENSIVE RING...



THE FIGHTING PETERED OUT AT THE APPROACHES TO THE BRIDGE. BOTH SIDES WERE REGROUPING, USING MORTARS AND MACHINE-GUNS TO DISCOURAGE ENEMY MOVEMENT...



THREE PLATOON'S TASK HAD BEEN TO NEUTRALISE THE ROAD A MILE WEST OF TREMS BRIDGE. THEY WERE IN POSITION THERE WHEN THE MAJOR'S SIGNAL ALERTED THEM...

...PROCEED AT ONCE TO TREMS BRIDGE APPROACHES...

ALL RIGHT, MEN... WE'RE MOVING EAST. WE'LL USE THE ROAD, SERGEANT...



THREE PLATOON HEADED EAST ALONG THE TREMS-BARVILLE ROAD. THEY RAN INTO A GERMAN PATROL ONLY HALF A MILE FROM THE BRIDGE.

JERRIES AHEAD, SIR.

THERE'S NO TIME TO FLANK THEM, MEN... GET STUCK IN...



THE PARATROOPERS MASSED TOGETHER TO RUSH THE ISOLATED POSITION. AS THE GERMANS SPREAD OUT TO BLOCK THEM, THE OLD WAR CRY OF THE RED DEVILS, THAT WEIRD RELIC OF THE EARLY TUNISIAN BATTLES, SWELLED TO A NERVE-SHATTERING CRESCENDO.

WAH-HAW-
MAHOMET!



THE SOLID WEDGE OF PARATROOPERS SLAMMED BRUTALLY INTO THE GERMAN LINE. THEY WERE ALL FIGHTING NOW, HAND TO HAND, SERGEANT BRISTOWE, LIEUTENANT SIMS, PRIVATE VOSPER...

OUT OF
OUR WAY!

AAAGH!

UGGGH!



THE SPANDAU GOT IN A FIVE-SECOND BURST BEFORE THE GERMAN LINE BROKE. IT WAS VOSPER'S STEN WHICH SNUFFED THE MACHINE-GUN'S CREW AND SERGEANT BRISTOWE'S BOOT WHICH TOPPLED THE TRIPOD...

THE BRIDGE,
MEN... KEEP GOING,
FOLLOW ME...

AAGH!



VOSPER COVERED THE HALF-MILE TO THE BRIDGE WITH THE REST OF THREE PLATOON, FLINGING HIMSELF INTO THE SHELTER OF THE DYKE IN A HUDDLE OF BODIES AS THE MORTARS PROBED FOR THEM...

THREE
PLATOON'S
MADE IT,
MAJOR.

FINE...
KEEP JERRY
OCCUPIED WHILE
I BRIEF PLATOON
COMMANDERS.



THREE PLATOON HUGGED THE MUDDY WALL OF THE DYKE. VOSPER WAS WITH THEM, BUT VOSPER WAS A DETECTIVE AS WELL AS A SOLDIER AND HE HAD A MURDER TO INVESTIGATE NOW...

STAY PUT, MEN.
COME ON, SERGEANT...
WE'D BETTER REPORT
TO THE MAJOR...

COR...
HOW MANY
DID WE LOSE IN
THAT LITTLE PARTY,
MATES?

WE LOST
TEDDY HALE
BEFORE IT
STARTED...

VOSPER HAD DONE A LOT OF THIS OBLIQUE QUESTIONING IN HIS FOUR YEARS OF UNDERCOVER WORK FOR THE S.I.B. HE WAS GOOD AT IT...

YEAH...
WHAT HAPPENED
TO HALE?

I HEARD HIS
STATIC-LINE WAS
KAPUT BEFORE
HE JUMPED...

WHAT DO
YOU MEAN,
VOSPER...
KAPUT?

THEY WERE ALL SERIOUS. VOSPER HAD EXPECTED THAT. BUT THE PLUMP MAN, BUNYARD, WAS FRIGHTENED...

YOU MEAN IT WASN'T AN ACCIDENT?

IT WAS CUT HALFWAY THROUGH. SO IT SNAPPED WHEN HE JUMPED.

WHAT DO YOU THINK HE MEANS, TOSH? ONE OF US SAWED IT THROUGH?

CUT... NO... NO... IT CAN'T BE...

ALL RIGHT, WEST, KEEP YOUR HAIR ON. IT'S ONE WAY OF DOING A BLOKE IN, THOUGH, EH?

YEAH... NOBODY'D SEE YOU DOING IT, STANDING UP CLOSE IN THE CRUSH BEFORE YOU JUMPED...

PACK IT IN, YOU TWO, WILL YOU...

WILLARD WAS ONE OF THOSE MEN WHO GET A KICK OUT OF NEEDING PEOPLE. IT WAS YOUNG PARRY WHO REACTED TO IT, VIOLENTLY...

SAY ONE OF US DID CUT TEDDY HALE'S STATIC-LINE, WHO'S THE CHIEF SUSPECT? VOSPER 'HERE WAS NUMBER SIX... AND PARRY WAS NUMBER EIGHT, RIGHT BEHIND HALE...

PARRY!

SHUT UP
SHUT UP!

PARRY WAS OVER THE DYKE WALL AND ON TO THE ROAD BEFORE THE OTHERS COULD STOP HIM...



LIEUTENANT SIMS AND SERGEANT BRISTOWE HAD BEEN MAKING THEIR WAY BACK TO THREE PLATOON WHEN PARRY BOLTED. THE SERGEANT MOVED QUICKLY...



VOSPER AND THE REST OF THREE PLATOON WATCHED DRY-MOUTHED AS SERGEANT BRISTOWE LUNGED TOWARDS PARRY. THEN LIEUTENANT SIMS SHOUTED TO THEM...



THE GERMAN GUNS HAD SWUNG ON PARRY AND THE VETERAN SERGEANT. D COMPANY'S COMMANDER SAW HIS CHANCE. THE ATTACKERS WERE OVER THE DYKE WALL IN THE THREE SECONDS BEFORE THE GUNS COULD BACKTRACK TO THEM...



IT WAS BUNYARD WHO VEERED LEFT TOWARDS THE BRIDGE ITSELF, AWAY FROM THE REST OF THREE PLATOON. HE HAD LOST HIS HEAD, PERHAPS. BUT VOSPER WENT WITH HIM DELIBERATELY...



VOSPER WAS AN S.I.B. MAN, THAT MEANT YOU STUCK WITH A CASE EVEN WHEN THE SPANDAU BULLETS WERE SINGING ROUND YOUR HEAD AND THE MORTARS WERE BRACKETING YOU...



BUNYARD HAD LOOKED FRIGHTENED WHEN VOSPER HAD TALKED ABOUT HALE'S CUT STATIC LINE. HE LOOKED FRIGHTENED NOW, AND VOSPER WANTED TO KNOW WHY...

HALE WAS A PAL OF YOURS, WASN'T HE, BUNNY?

WE VOLUNTEERED FOR THIS MOB TOGETHER. I WISH TO HECK WE HADN'T—TEDDY'D BE ALIVE NOW, FOR ONE THING... AND I WOULDN'T BE LOOKING OVER MY SHOULDER...

VOSPER KEPT HIS VOICE QUIET, CASUAL. HE HAD WORKED HARD FOR A CLUE, AND HE HAD GOT IT...

YOU MEAN THE SAME ACCIDENT MIGHT HAPPEN TO YOU?

MAYBE, MATE... ACCIDENTS CAN BE ARRANGED NICE AND CONVENIENT FOR A PARATROOPER. WISH WE'D NEVER GONE ON THAT PESCARA DO...



BUNYARD FISHED SOMETHING FROM HIS BATTLEDRESS POCKET JUST AS SERGEANT BRISTOWE TURNED UP WITH PARRY...

PESCARA?

NEITHER OF THEM WOULD DO A THING LIKE THAT... NOT EVEN TO GET TEDDY'S SHARE. BUT I'LL WATCH IT... I GOT A KEY TO THAT LOCK-UP, SAME AS THEM—

GIVE ME A HAND WITH PARRY, SOMEONE...



BEFORE BUNYARD HAD A CHANCE TO SAY MORE,
THE REST OF THREE PLATOON HAD RACED UP...

NICE WORK,
SARGE... YOU ALL
RIGHT, PARRY?

YES, CORP...
I'M SORRY...

GET A GRIP ON YOURSELF,
PARRY, AND YOU TWO, BUNYARD
AND VOSPER. WE'LL ALL SUFFER
IF YOU DON'T OBEY ORDERS.

VOSPER WATCHED PARRY WHILE
SIMS TALKED. PARRY WAS ANOTHER
FRIGHTENED MAN, BUT HE WAS
YOUNG — IN HIS CASE IT WAS
PROBABLY NERVES...

THE MAJOR CREATED
A DIVERSION SO THAT WE
COULD GET ACROSS TO THE
RIVER BANK HERE. WE'RE
GOING TO CLIMB OUT ALONG
THE BRIDGE, SHIN OVER,
AND TAKE THE JERRIES
IN THE REAR...

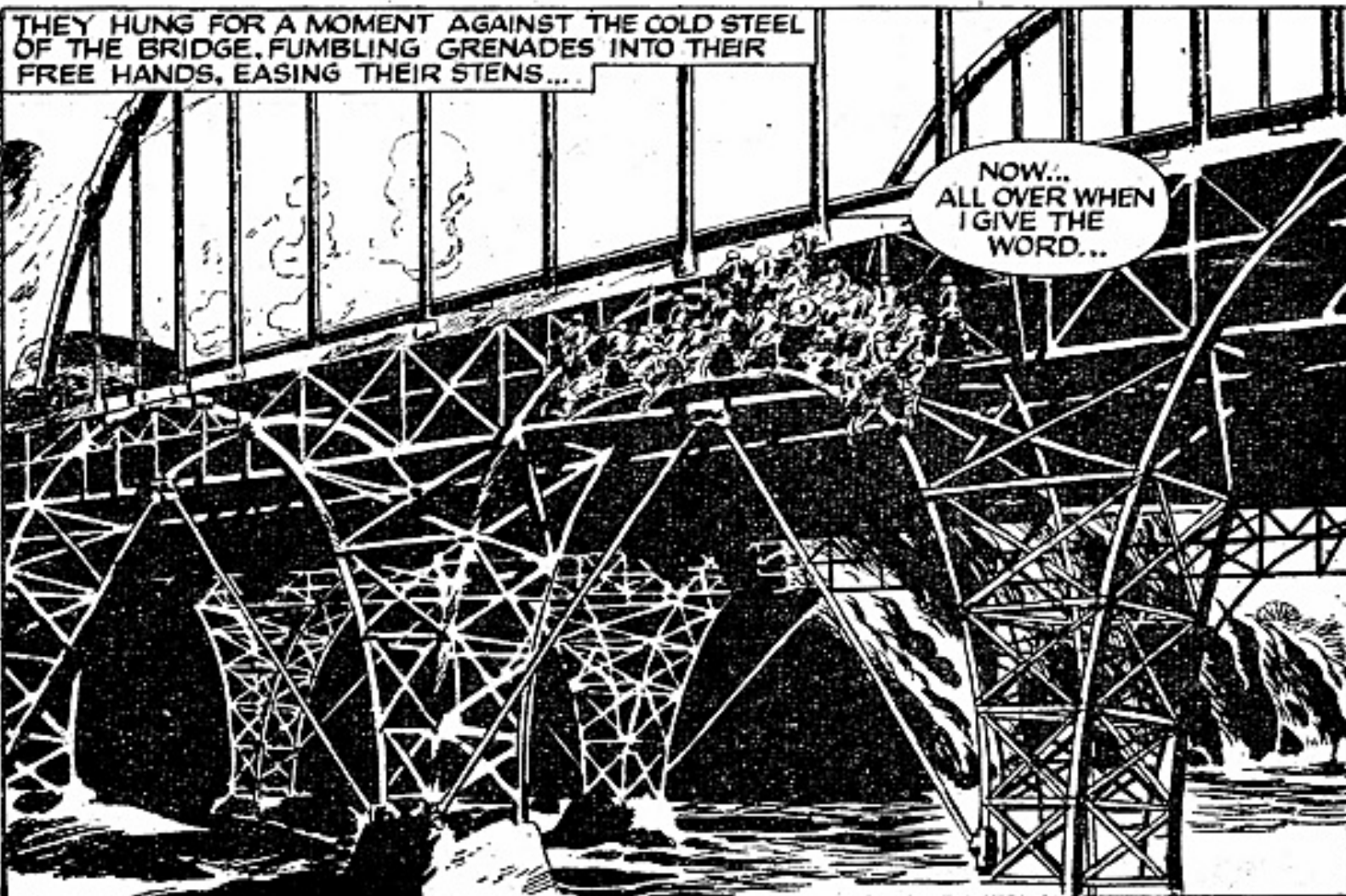
THERE WAS A LOT OF NOISE FROM THE BRIDGE APPROACHES, MORTAR FIRE, THE HARSH RATTLE OF THE SPANDALS. UNDER COVER OF IT, THREE PLATOON EASED ALONG THE STEEL TRUSSES OF THE BRIDGE...

FAR ENOUGH, MEN... BUNCH TOGETHER NOW... AND WAIT FOR IT...



THEY HUNG FOR A MOMENT AGAINST THE COLD STEEL OF THE BRIDGE, FUMBLING GRENADES INTO THEIR FREE HANDS, EASING THEIR STENS...

NOW... ALL OVER WHEN I GIVE THE WORD...



Paratroop

THEY WERE VITAL MOMENTS IN THE CASE ON WHICH VOSPER WAS WORKING, FOR, DURING THOSE SECONDS OF WAITING, ANOTHER MURDER WAS ARRANGED!



IT TOOK THE PARATROOPERS EIGHT SECONDS TO SWARM OVER THE BRIDGE AND CHARGE TOWARDS THE GERMAN REAR...



THE GRENADE THAT THE MURDERER HAD TUCKED INTO PRIVATE BUNYARD'S SMOCK MUST HAVE HAD A NINE-SECOND FUSE ON IT. THE EXPLOSION WAS SAVAGE, FINAL...



THE GERMANS OPENED UP ON THREE PLATOON, THEY WERE USING SCHMEISSERS, NOT GRENADES. VOSPER KNEW ALREADY THAT THIS WAS MURDER.



THEIR DEFENCE SPLIT BY THREE PLATOON'S ATTACK FROM THE REAR, THE GERMANS WERE ENGAGED AT CLOSE QUARTERS. THEIR SPANDAUS WERE USELESS. IT WAS BRUTE STRENGTH THAT COUNTED NOW...


FLUSH
OUT THE
PILLBOXES,
MEN...



THE GERMANS FOUGHT HARD AND STUBBORNLY, BUT THE RED DEVILS BLUDGEONED THEM INTO SUBMISSION. AFTER FIVE MINUTES, LIEUTENANT SIMS LOOKED ROUND...

WHAT
HAPPENED
TO BUNYARD,
SIR?

JUST WHAT I WAS
WONDERING, SERGEANT.
I RECKON VOSPER
KNOWS THE ANSWER.



VOSPER DID NOT KNOW THE ANSWER... BUT HE WAS WORKING ON IT...

THE GRENADE MUST HAVE BEEN PLANTED ON HIM WHILE WE WERE ALL BUNCHED TOGETHER AT THE BRIDGE... THE MURDERER HAD NINE SECONDS TO GET CLEAR AFTER PULLING THE PIN...



THE DEAD MAN'S HAND WAS CLENCHED. VOSPER PRISED OPEN THE LAX FINGERS. THERE LAY A KEY - THE KEY BUNYARD HAD BEEN SPEAKING ABOUT WHEN HE AND VOSPER WERE UNDER THE BRIDGE...



THE LIEUTENANT AND THE SERGEANT SAW VOSPER STRAIGHTEN UP AGAIN. THEY COULD NOT SEE THE KEY IN HIS HAND...

A KEY TO A LOCK-UP... I WONDER...



WHAT IS VOSPER UP TO?

WAIT, SERGEANT... THAT'S WHAT WE'RE GOING TO FIND OUT IN GOOD TIME...

Chapter 4. Key to Murder

A MONTH AFTER THE D-DAY DROP, D COMPANY WAS WITHDRAWN FROM THE NORMANDY BATTLE AND SENT ON HOME LEAVE. IT GAVE VOSPER A CHANCE TO REPORT TO S.I.B. HEADQUARTERS IN LONDON...



YOU THINK BOTH THE MURDERED MEN WERE INVOLVED IN THE LOOTING OF THE PESCARA BULLION, VOSPER?

YES, COLONEL. BUNYARD TALKED ABOUT 'NEITHER OF THEM' DOING A THING LIKE MURDERING HALE... SOUNDS AS IF THERE WERE TWO OTHER MEN IN THE CONSPIRACY BESIDES HIMSELF AND HALE... FOUR OF THEM TOGETHER...



SO THE MURDERER KILLED HALE AND BUNYARD TO GET A BIGGER SHARE OF THE LOOT FOR HIMSELF?

OR TO STOP THEM TALKING. I'M INTERESTED IN THE LOCK-UP BUNYARD MENTIONED BEFORE HE WAS KILLED. MY GUESS IS THE BULLION'S THERE...

I'LL MAKE ANOTHER GUESS, TOO, COLONEL, THAT THE LOCK-UP IS SOMEWHERE NEAR THE REGIMENTAL DEPOT AT SELSBY. THAT'S WHY I WANT TO BE THERE WHEN D COMPANY REPORTS BACK IN A WEEK'S TIME...



COLONEL DICKSON PAUSED AT THE DOOR OF THE ROOM...

OFFICIALLY THOSE TWO DEAD MEN WERE JUST BATTLE CASUALTIES, AND NO-ONE IN D COMPANY HAS REPORTED OTHERWISE, SO THE CASE IS STILL UNDERCOVER AS FAR AS THE ARMY'S CONCERNED. ANY IDEAS ON HOW TO TAKE IT FROM HERE, VOSPER?

I'VE GOT A LOCK-UP KEY, COLONEL...

TWO WEEKS LATER, PRIVATE VOSPER WAS MAKING TRAINING DROPS WITH THE REST OF D COMPANY FROM A WHITLEY OVER THE R.A.F. AIRFIELD NEAR THE REGIMENTAL DEPOT AT SELSBY IN THE MIDLANDS...

GO-
GO-
GO-

AT THE MOBILE CANTEEN, AFTER THE DROP THAT DAY, VOSPER SHOWED THE KEY TO THE FIRST OF HIS SUSPECTS...

HERE, WILLARD, YOU WERE A PAL OF BUNYARD'S. HE GAVE ME THIS KEY BEFORE HE GOT THE CHOP ON THAT BRIDGE... SAID SOMETHING ABOUT A LOCK-UP... ONLY HE DIDN'T TELL ME WHERE IT WAS...

SEARCH ME, MATE. HE CAME FROM HULL, DIDN'T HE? I SUPPOSE IT'S NEAR THERE...

VOSPER REASONED THAT THE KEY WOULD SCARE THE TWO GUILTY MEN. THEIR FIRST MOVE WOULD PROBABLY BE TO VISIT THE LOCK-UP AND CHECK ON THE LOOT. HE SHADOWED WILLARD INTO SELSBY THAT EVENING...

ALL RIGHT, BIG MOUTH, IF YOU SKYBIRDS ARE SO TOUGH, WHY AREN'T YOU OVER IN FRANCE NOW MIXING IT WITH THE JERRIES?

I'LL SHOW YOU WHETHER WE'RE TOUGH OR NOT...

THAT SEEMS TO LET WILLARD OUT... HIS IDEA OF A NIGHT OUT IS A ROUGH HOUSE...

IT WAS THREE DAYS BEFORE VOSPER GOT ANOTHER CHANCE TO SIFT THE SUSPECTS. THREE PLATOON HAD BEEN BRUSHING-UP ON THEIR UNARMED COMBAT ROUTINE THAT DAY...

HAND TO THE THROAT, BARBER... CHOP IT DOWN, LAD. NOT SO ROUGH, PARRY... SAVE THE REAL STUFF FOR THE JERRIES...

UGGGH!



AFTER THE WORKOUT, VOSPER FOUND BARBER ALONE IN THE HUT. HE GOT THE KEY OUT CASUALLY...

I SAY, BARBER, DID OLD BUNYARD EVER MENTION A LOCK-UP TO YOU? HE GAVE ME A KEY TO IT, BEFORE HE COPPED IT THAT DAY AT TREMS. SAID I COULD HAVE WHAT'S IN IT...

LOCK-UP, EHD? FIRST I'VE HEARD OF IT. 'FRAID I CAN'T HELP YOU, MATE...



BARBER WENT INTO SELSBY THAT EVENING. HE MADE SURE HE WAS ALONE, TOO. BUT HE HAD GOOD ENOUGH REASON FOR THAT, AS VOSPER FOUND OUT WHEN HE SHADOWED HIM...

LOOKS AS IF BARBER'S IN THE CLEAR, TOO...



THROUGH JULY AND AUGUST, WHILE D COMPANY TRAINED FOR THE NEXT OPERATION, VOSPER WORKED PATIENTLY AT HIS INVESTIGATION. TWO OF THESE MEN, HE KNEW, WERE LOOTERS... BUT ONE WAS A MURDERER...

PUT YOUR BACKS INTO IT, THREE PLATOON... YOU'RE GOING TO NEED THOSE MUSCLES WHEN JERRY GETS HIS HANDS ON YOU...




BY THE BEGINNING OF SEPTEMBER, WEST AND PARRY WERE THE ONLY TWO MEN VOSPER HAD NOT TESTED. HE FOUND THEM TOGETHER IN THE CANTEEN THAT EVENING...



A LOCAL BUS RAN THE TWO MILES INTO SELSBY FROM THE PARATROOP DEPOT. WEST WAS ALONE WHEN HE GOT OFF NEAR THE TOWN STATION LATER THAT EVENING. VOSPER WATCHED HIM WITH QUICKENING PULSE ...



THE RAILWAY YARDS AT SELSBY WERE A VITAL LINK BETWEEN THE INDUSTRIAL NORTH AND THE SOUTHERN INVASION PORTS. THE LUFTWAFFE HAD BOMBED THEM SEVERAL TIMES THAT SUMMER. THEY TRIED AGAIN THAT NIGHT...



WHATEVER HE'S UP TO, THE RAID'S NOT GOING TO STOP HIM... AND THERE ARE LOCK-UPS ALONG THIS STRETCH, TOO...

THE ROAD WEST WAS FOLLOWING CURVED AROUND UNDER THE EMBANKMENT BELOW THE RAILWAY YARDS. THE TALL PARATROOPER KEPT GOING. HE PAID NO ATTENTION TO THE INCENDIARIES SHOWERING DOWN, OR THE FLAK.



VOSPER WAS CERTAIN NOW THAT HE HAD FOUND ONE OF THE TWO REMAINING MEN INVOLVED IN THE PESCARA LOOTING. BUT HE HAD NOT BARGAINED ON THE SECOND MAN SHOWING UP... SUDDENLY HE SPOTTED A DARK FIGURE HURLING SOMETHING TOWARDS WEST...



THE GRENADE BURST IN MID-AIR SIX INCHES FROM WEST'S SHOULDER. WHATEVER THE TALL PARATROOPER WAS HEADING TOWARDS THAT NIGHT, HE WOULD NEVER REACH IT...



THE MAN ON THE EMBANKMENT RAN, A DARK FIGURE SILHOUETTED BY THE GLARE OF THE INCENDIARIES BEHIND HIM. HE HEADED TOWARDS THE GLARE, WITH VOSPER CHASING STRONGLY...



VOSPER FIRED TWO SHOTS, BUT HE KNEW IT WAS USELESS. THERE WAS TOO MUCH CONFUSION IN THE RAILWAY YARDS THAT NIGHT, TOO MANY OTHER MEN...



VOSPER HALTED ON THE EMBANKMENT, AND TURNED SLOWLY AROUND. WEST WAS LYING BELOW, NOT MOVING. THE MURDERER HAD BEEN STANDING CLOSE BY WHEN HE FLUNG THE GRENADE...



THERE WAS SOMETHING WITH A DULL SHINE LYING AT VOSPER'S FEET. HE BENT AND PICKED IT UP. IT WAS A TARNISHED ARMY CAP BADGE...



VOSPER PUT THE BADGE IN HIS POCKET, AND SCRAMBLED THOUGHTFULLY DOWN TO WEST'S BODY. HIS FACE WAS GRIM...

IT COULD HAVE BEEN PLANTED TO PUT ME OFF THE TRACK... BUT SOMEHOW I DON'T THINK SO. THE MURDERER COULDN'T HAVE KNOWN I MEANT TO FOLLOW WEST BEFOREHAND, EVEN THOUGH HE KNEW WHERE WEST WAS GOING.



WEST WAS LYING ON HIS FACE. HE WAS DEAD ALL RIGHT.

HE'S CLEVER, THIS BLOKE I'M UP AGAINST. WHEN THEY FIND THE BODY THEY'LL RECKON HE'S AN AIR RAID CASUALTY...



VOSPER WAS LOOKING FOR WEST'S KEY WHEN THE BEAM OF A TORCH SUDDENLY DAZZLED HIM. HIS HANDS WERE IN THE DEAD MAN'S POCKETS...

WHAT THE...

ALL RIGHT, VOSPER... YOU'VE HAD ENOUGH ROPE...



IT WAS LIEUTENANT SIMS. HE HAD A GUN IN HIS HAND
AND HIS VOICE WAS AS HARSH AS HIS FACE...

YOU'VE GOT
IT ALL WRONG,
LIEUTENANT.

I DON'T THINK
SO, VOSPER. THREE
MEN HAVE BEEN KILLED
IN SUSPICIOUS CIRCUMSTANCES.
EACH TIME, YOU'RE AROUND
WHEN THE BODY'S FOUND.
GET MOVING NOW.


SIMS HAD A JEEP PARKED A HUNDRED YARDS BACK ALONG THE ROAD.
HE MUST HAVE BEEN SHADOWING VOSPER SINCE HE LEFT THE BUS,
THOUGH OBVIOUSLY HE HAD NOT SEEN THE REAL MURDERER...

I'M TAKING YOU
BACK TO THE DEPOT,
VOSPER. I DON'T KNOW
WHAT YOUR GAME IS —
OR WHETHER YOU'RE
JUST MAD — BUT I THINK
YOU'RE A KILLER!

ALL RIGHT,
LIEUTENANT.
I'LL TELL MY STORY
TO THE
COLONEL...


GB 742

VOSPER WAS PUT IN A CELL BACK AT THE DEPOT, UNDER GUARD. IT WAS THE VETERAN SERGEANT BRISTOWE WHO CAME FOR HIM AN HOUR LATER...



IF WHAT THE LIEUTENANT SAYS IS TRUE... IF YOU'VE BEEN MURDERING MY LADS, I'LL DO YOU IN WITH MY OWN HANDS, VOSPER.

FOUR HARD-FACED MEN WATCHED VOSPER AS HE PUT HIS HAND INSIDE HIS BATTLEDRESS BLOUSE IN COLONEL FROST'S ROOM FIVE MINUTES LATER...



ALL RIGHT, VOSPER, I'M LISTENING. YOUR STORY HAD BETTER BE A GOOD ONE.

IT'S A GOOD ONE, COLONEL. FIRST, I WANT YOU TO LOOK AT THIS...

VOSPER HANDED THE WALLET TO THE COLONEL. THERE WAS A CARD IN IT. IT HAD VOSPER'S REAL NAME IN IT, HIS PHOTOGRAPH, AND HIS RANK AND NUMBER IN THE SPECIAL INVESTIGATION DEPARTMENT.

GREAT SCOTT!
THAT S.I.B. WALLAH,
COLONEL DICKSON, SAID
HE WAS PUTTING ONE OF
HIS MEN IN D COMPANY!
YOU'VE BEEN INVESTIGATING
THAT PESCARA BUSINESS,
HAVEN'T YOU?



VOSPER OUTLINED THE FACTS. THE FOUR MEN LISTENED IN GRIM SILENCE....

THE PESCARA BULLION AND THE
THREE MURDERS ARE TIED TOGETHER.
THE ONLY WAY WE CAN CATCH OUR MAN
IS TO SIT TIGHT AND WAIT FOR HIM
TO MAKE A MISTAKE. DIRECT
QUESTIONING WOULD BE
USELESS...



MAYBE...
WE'VE NO TIME
FOR IT NOW, ANYWAY.
I HAD A SIGNAL FROM
DIVISIONAL HEADQUARTERS
AN HOUR AGO...

COLONEL FROST'S VOICE WAS SOMBRE...

BATTLE ORDERS, GENTLEMEN... THE REGIMENT ENTRAINS FOR THE SOUTH IN THREE DAYS' TIME... YOU WANT TO CARRY ON AS BEFORE, VOSPER?

IT'S THE ONLY WAY, SIR. I'VE GOT MY OWN IDEAS ABOUT THE IDENTITY OF THE MURDERER, BUT I NEED PROOF.

EMOUL VERDIEZ
H.Q. UNITED KINGDOM AREA E
OFFICIAL NOTICE
TH. STP.
OPERATION MARKET GARDEN
Copy
JOHNSON MAJOR GEN. EXTEMP
MAJOR GENERAL EDWARD BURNS
ET. C. HQ. JOHNSON MAJ. GEN.

IF WHAT YOU SAY IS TRUE, VOSPER, THE MURDERER HAS WIPED OUT HIS THREE ACCOMPLICES. HE WON'T TRY TO KILL AGAIN, WILL HE?

NOT UNLESS HE TRIES TO KILL ME, SIR...

Chapter 5. Case Closed

WITH VOSPER STILL ON THE TRAIL OF THE KILLER, THE REGIMENT WAS SENT TO ARNHEM. D COMPANY DROPPED ON THE SECOND DAY OF THE BIGGEST AIRBORNE OFFENSIVE IN HISTORY...



AT COLONEL FROST'S ORDERS, THE MEN OF THREE PLATOON HAD BEEN DISPERSED AMONG SEVERAL AIRCRAFT. THERE WAS LITTLE RISK THAT THE MURDERER WOULD STRIKE AGAIN, BUT THE COLONEL WAS TAKING NO CHANCES.



NUMBER FIVE IN THE HEADQUARTERS COMPANY STICK, VOSPER JUMPED FIVE HUNDRED FEET ABOVE THE RAVAGED DUTCH FIELDS, THE FLAK SPITTING VENGEFULLY UP AT HIM. ALREADY THE GERMAN DEFENCES AT ARNHEM WERE HITTING BACK...



WITH LESS THAN A DOZEN CASUALTIES, THREE PLATOON FORMED UP ON THE GROUND. LIEUTENANT SIMS LED THEM THROUGH STREETS WRECKED IN THE FIRST DAY'S BITTER FIGHTING TOWARDS THE BRIDGE OVER THE RHINE...



THE BRIDGE AT ARNHEM, TAKEN BY THE BRITISH, WAS THE KEY TO THE WHOLE SAVAGE BATTLE. THROUGH THAT DAY AND THE NEXT, THREE PLATOON FOUGHT A CONFUSED BATTLE IN THE STREETS...



SERGEANT BRISTOWE HELD THREE PLATOON TOGETHER DURING THOSE FIRST TWO HECTIC DAYS IN ARNHEM. HE WAS THOUGHTFUL AS FAR AS HIS MEN WERE CONCERNED, AS WELL AS TOUGH...



GOOD WORK, VOSPER. SORRY I GAVE YOU THE ROUGH SIDE OF MY TONGUE THAT NIGHT IN THE DEPOT!

THAT'S OKAY, SARGE!


VOSPER CLIPPED A FRESH MAGAZINE TO HIS STEN. HE GLANCED AT THE GREY-HAIRED SERGEANT...

THESE MURDERS MUST SEEM A ROTTEN BUSINESS TO YOU, SARGE, LOOKING AFTER YOUR MEN AS YOU DO...

TWENTY YEARS I'VE BEEN IN THE ARMY, VOSPER. SOME OF THESE LADS WERE KIDS WHEN I PUT UP MY FIRST STRIPE... WHO'S GOING TO LOOK AFTER THEM IF I DON'T?




FOR FIVE MORE DAYS, VOSPER HARDLY THOUGHT OF THE PESCARA BULLION CASE. HE WAS A SOLDIER FIGHTING FOR HIS LIFE. IT WAS LIEUTENANT SIMS, ON THE EIGHTH DAY OF ARNHEM, WHO REMINDED HIM OF HIS OTHER DUTY...



HALLO, VOSPER...
COME ACROSS ANY
CLUES SINCE WE
DROPPED?

NO... NO CLUES, SIR.
MAYBE THE MURDERER'S
HOPING THAT JERRY WILL
PUT A BULLET THROUGH
MY HEAD AND SAVE
HIM A JOB!

THREE PLATOON WAS HOLDING A HANDFUL OF RUINED HOUSES IN THE STREETS HALF A MILE FROM ARNHEM BRIDGE. VOSPER WAS PINPOINTING SNIPERS...



BUT YOU SAID
BACK AT THE
DEPOT THAT YOU
HAD SOME IDEA
ABOUT THE MURDERER'S
IDENTITY...

I THINK I KNOW
WHO HE IS, LIEUTENANT.
AND I THINK HE'LL HAVE
A SHOT AT KILLING ME
BEFORE LONG. THAT MAY
BE THE ONLY WAY I CAN
GET THE PROOF I NEED
TO NAIL HIM!

THAT DAY, WITH THE AIRBORNE DIVISION FIGHTING A LOSING BATTLE IN THE RAVAGED STREETS, THE GERMANS BROUGHT UP TANKS...

WITHDRAW,
MEN... FIND COVER
FARTHER BACK!

FOLLOW ME,
LADS! TAKE IT
EASY NOW...

VOSPER HAD A STRANGE SIXTH SENSE THEN, THAT THE BLOODSTAINED DRAMA WHICH HAD OPENED AT PESCARA WAS REACHING ITS LAST GRIM ACT...

SERGEANT...
GET PARRY
BACK HERE!

COME BACK,
PARRY— YOU CAN'T
FIGHT TANKS WITH
A STEN!



EVEN AS HE WATCHED PARRY FIRING AT THE TANK IN A BERSERK FRENZY, VOSPER FELT THE ABSOLUTE CONVICTION THAT THE MURDERER WOULD MAKE HIS MOVE SOON...

DON'T BE A FOOL, PARRY. COME BACK WITH THE REST OF US!

IT'S NO CRIME KILLING JERRIES, IS IT? LEAVE ME - I'LL KILL 'EM!

PARRY WAS WHITE-FACED, RIGID WITH TENSION. THE CORPORAL TOOK HIM OFF THE SERGEANT'S HANDS.

OKAY, SARGE, I'LL CALM HIM DOWN. HE'LL BE ALL RIGHT!

HE'S JUST A KID, SIR. IT'S ENOUGH TO SEND A KID OFF HIS ROCKER, THIS LOT...

HE BLEW HIS TOP ONCE BEFORE - AT THE TREMS BRIDGE IN NORMANDY... AFTER HALE HAD CANDLED!

SERGEANT BRISTOWE LOOKED HAGGARDLY AT THE YOUNG OFFICER, HIS EYES WIDE.



YOU DON'T THINK... NOT YOUNG PARRY, SIR!

YOU'D BETTER WATCH HIM FROM NOW ON, SERGEANT.

THE TANK'S BACKING-UP, LIEUTENANT!

THE GERMAN TANK HOSED THE STREET WITH MACHINE-GUN FIRE BEFORE IT BACKED AROUND THE FAR CORNER. THEN THERE WAS SILENCE...



SOUNDS AS THOUGH IT'S GONE, SIR...

YES... BUT IT MAY BE WAITING TO SHOOT US UP WHEN WE MAKE A MOVE. I'LL RECCÉ FROM THAT HOUSE ON THE CORNER. COME WITH ME, VOSPER... WE'LL APPROACH IT FROM THE BACK...

THE LIEUTENANT AND VOSPER TURNED AND PICKED THEIR WAY THROUGH THE RUBBLE TO THE REAR OF THE ROW OF HOUSES. THEY LEFT SERGEANT BRISTOWE THERE...



GIVE US FIVE MINUTES IN THE HOUSE BEFORE YOU MOVE, SERGEANT...

RIGHT, SIR. GO EASY NOW...

THERE WAS NO SHELLING, NO RIFLE FIRE EVEN, AS LIEUTENANT SIMS AND VOSPER SLIPPED ACROSS THE WRECKAGE AT THE REAR OF THE HOUSES. THE SILENCE WAS EERIE...



THE TWO MEN CROUCHED IN THE RUINED GROUND FLOOR OF THE HOUSE ON THE CORNER. VOSPER STILL HAD THE FEELING THAT DEATH WAS VERY CLOSE TO HIM NOW...



SERGEANT BRISTOWE WAITED FOR FIVE MINUTES. HE MOVED THEN, CAREFULLY, HIS QUIET VOICE ROUSING THE MEN OF THREE PLATOON...



IN THE SHELL OF THE HOUSE ON THE CORNER, THE TWO MEN HEARD THE CAREFUL FOOTSTEPS APPROACHING ALONG THE STREET. A STEN RATTLED AND WAS SILENT. LIEUTENANT SIMS GLANCED AT VOSPER...

WHAT WAS THAT, VOSPER? JERRY'S BACKED OUT... THOSE ARE OUR OWN MEN OUT THERE...

YES, LIEUTENANT... THAT'S WHY I'M WORRIED...



IT WAS A BRITISH BOOT WHICH SUDDENLY, SAVAGELY KICKED OPEN THE DOOR. THEY WERE BRITISH FINGERS WHICH TIGHTENED ON THE STEN...



IT WAS PARRY WHO STOOD IN THE DOORWAY WITH HATRED IN HIS FACE AND THE STEN BLAZING AT HIS HIP. VOSPER SAW THAT EVEN AS HE LUNGED BELOW THE SCYTHING ARC OF THE BULLETS....



VOSPER'S SHOUT WAS TOO LATE TO CHECK LIEUTENANT SIMS' FIRST TWO BULLETS. THE SECOND ONE HIT PARRY IN THE CHEST. BUT THE STEN HAD ALREADY CHOKED OFF...



SIMS AND VOSPER BOTH LUNGED FORWARD TOWARDS THE FALLEN BODY, BUT VOSPER RAN ON PAST HIM THROUGH THE DOORWAY. SIMS TURNED, WHITE-FACED...



THREE PLATOON HAD MOVED ON ROUND THE CORNER. THE STREET SEEMED EMPTY WHEN VOSPER GOT THERE, BUT THERE WAS A MAN IN THE SHADOW OF THE WRECKED HOUSE OPPOSITE...



HE CAME OUT, AND HIS HANDS WERE EMPTY. BUT THE LINED FACE OF SERGEANT BRISTOWE WAS FILLED NOW WITH A VENOMOUS HATRED...

I SHOULD HAVE KILLED YOU MYSELF, VOSPER, AND NOT LEFT IT TO THAT CRAZY KID!

MAYBE PARRY'S A LITTLE CRAZY, SERGEANT... CRAZY TO KILL GERMANS, LIKE THE ONES YOU TOLD HIM HE'D FIND IN THAT HOUSE WHERE YOU KNEW I'D BE. BUT YOU'RE CRAZIER—YOU'VE KILLED THREE OF YOUR OWN MEN!

THE SERGEANT MOVED STIFFLY. SUDDENLY HE LOOKED OLD AND BITTER...

WHY SHOULD THEY HAVE HAD A SHARE OF THAT GOLD? I FOUND IT! AND I'VE SERVED TWENTY YEARS, I'VE SWEATED FOR IT!

TWENTY YEARS I'VE SERVED... AND THE ARMY WILL CHUCK ME OUT WITH A FEW ROTTEN SHILLINGS WHEN THIS LOT'S OVER. I EARNED THAT GOLD—WHAT DID IT MATTER IF I HAD TO KILL THREE MORE MEN WHO WANTED TO GET THEIR GREEDY FINGERS ON IT?



IT WAS SIMS WHO SAW THE GERMAN TANK FIRST. IT MUST HAVE MADE A COMPLETE CIRCUIT TO TRAP THREE PLATOON, FOR IT WAS NOSING UP FROM THE FAR END OF THE STREET...



SERGEANT BRISTOWE WAS SPRAWLED ON THE GROUND WHEN HIS MEN CAME RUNNING BACK FROM AROUND THE CORNER. HE WAS ALREADY DEAD.



LEUTENANT SIMS LET THE MEN GO. HE WAS TOO SHAKEN TO GIVE ANY COMMANDS. HE DROPPED DOWN BESIDE VOSPER, BESIDE THE BODY OF THE MURDERER WITH THREE STRIPES ON HIS ARM...



THREE PLATOON DESTROYED THE GERMAN TANK. SERGEANT BRISTOWE, THE MURDERER, WAS DEAD. IT WAS SERGEANT BRISTOWE, THE TOUGH, KINDLY LEGEND, WHO INSPIRED HIS MEN ON THAT EIGHTH DAY OF ARNHEM.



THAT NIGHT CAME THE BITTER END OF FIRST AIRBORNE'S HEROIC BATTLE AT ARNHEM. CUT OFF, WITH NO AMMUNITION LEFT AND NO HOPE OF RELIEF, ONLY A HANDFUL OF MEN WOULD ESCAPE THROUGH THE IMPLACABLE GERMAN CORDON...



THAT NIGHT, STUMBLING OUT OF THE INFERNO OF ARNHEM BETWEEN COLONEL FROST AND LIEUTENANT SIMS, VOSPER OUTLINED THE FACTS...

BUT WHAT ABOUT PARRY?
I DON'T UNDERSTAND
THAT BUSINESS,
VOSPER...

IT'S MY GUESS THAT PARRY SAW THE CUT IN HALE'S STATIC LINE BEFORE HE JUMPED THAT DAY OVER NORMANDY. HE MAY HAVE BEEN TOO STRUNG-UP TO WARN HALE, BUT HE BLAMED HIMSELF AFTERWARDS... THAT'S WHAT MADE HIM RUN FOR IT BY THE BRIDGE THAT DAY WHEN THE MEN NEEDED HIM...

LATER, AS THE SMALL BOAT CROSSED THE RHINE TO FREEDOM...

AND I GATHER THAT SERGEANT BRISTOWE TOLD PARRY THERE WERE GERMANS IN THAT HOUSE WHERE YOU WERE WAITING. THAT'S WHY HE CAME STORMING IN, FIRING...

YES, COLONEL. WHEN LIEUTENANT SIMS GOT SUSPICIOUS OF PARRY, THE SERGEANT SAW HIS CHANCE TO HAVE ME KILLED... THAT WAS CLEVER!

A WEEK LATER, COLONEL FROST, LIEUTENANT SIMS AND VOSPER WERE WALKING UP THE NARROW ROAD BESIDE THE RAILWAY YARDS AT SELSBY AND COLONEL DICKSON OF THE S.I.B. WAS WITH THEM...

YOU'VE PROBABLY TOLD THE OTHERS, VOSPER, NOW ENLIGHTEN ME... WHAT MADE YOU SUSPICIOUS OF SERGEANT BRISTOWE?

JUST A CAP BADGE, COLONEL. I FOUND IT ON THE GROUND THE NIGHT WEST WAS KILLED. IT WAS THE BADGE OF THE HUNTSHIRE REGIMENT... AND I REMEMBERED THE SERGEANT ONCE TELLING US HE'D BEEN IN THAT MOB...

THEY FOUND THE GOLD IN THE SEVENTH LOCK-UP THEY TRIED. THEY OPENED IT WITH SERGEANT BRISTOWE'S KEY. THE WHOLE STORY IS LISTED AS THE PESCARA BULLION CASE IN THE FILES OF THE SPECIAL INVESTIGATION BRANCH. NOW THE FILE IS CLOSED...



Printed in England by Messrs. Percy Brothers Ltd., Manchester 1, and published each month by Fleetway Publications Ltd., Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. Advertisement Offices: Tallis House, Tallis Street, London, E.C.4. Sole Agents: Australasia, Messrs. Gordon & Gotch Ltd. South Africa, Central News Agency Ltd. Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland, Messrs. Kingstons Ltd. WAR PICTURE LIBRARY is sold subject to the following conditions, that it shall not, without the written consent of the Publishers first given, be lent, resold, hired out or otherwise disposed of by way of Trade except at the full retail price as shown on the cover; and that it shall not be lent, resold, hired out or otherwise disposed of in a mutilated condition, or in any unauthorized cover by way of Trade; or affixed to or as part of any publication or advertising, literary or pictorial matter whatsoever.

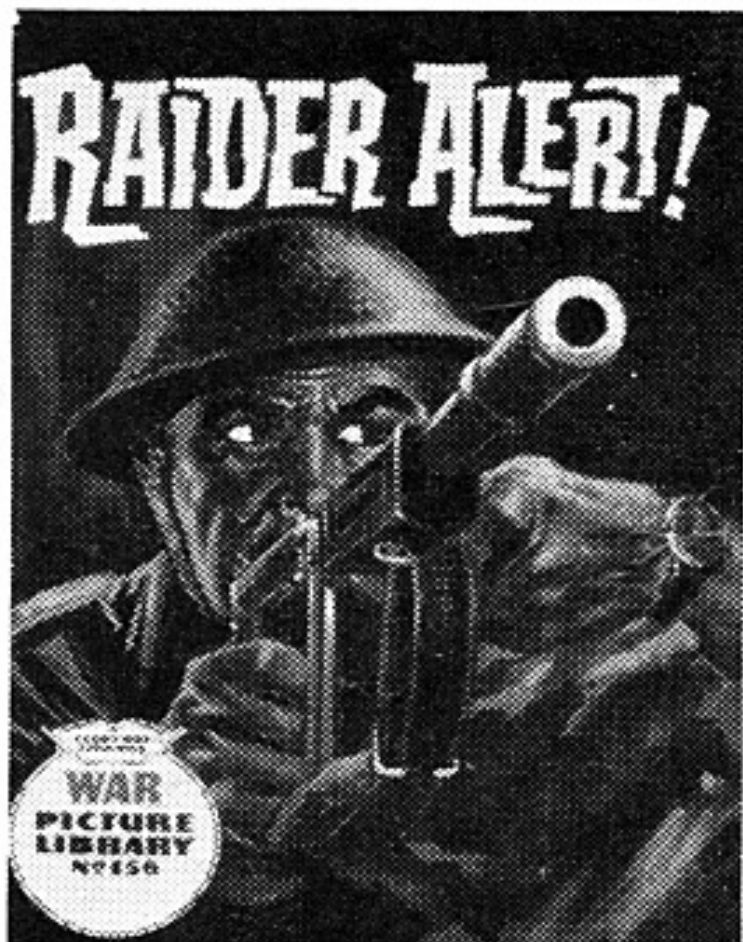
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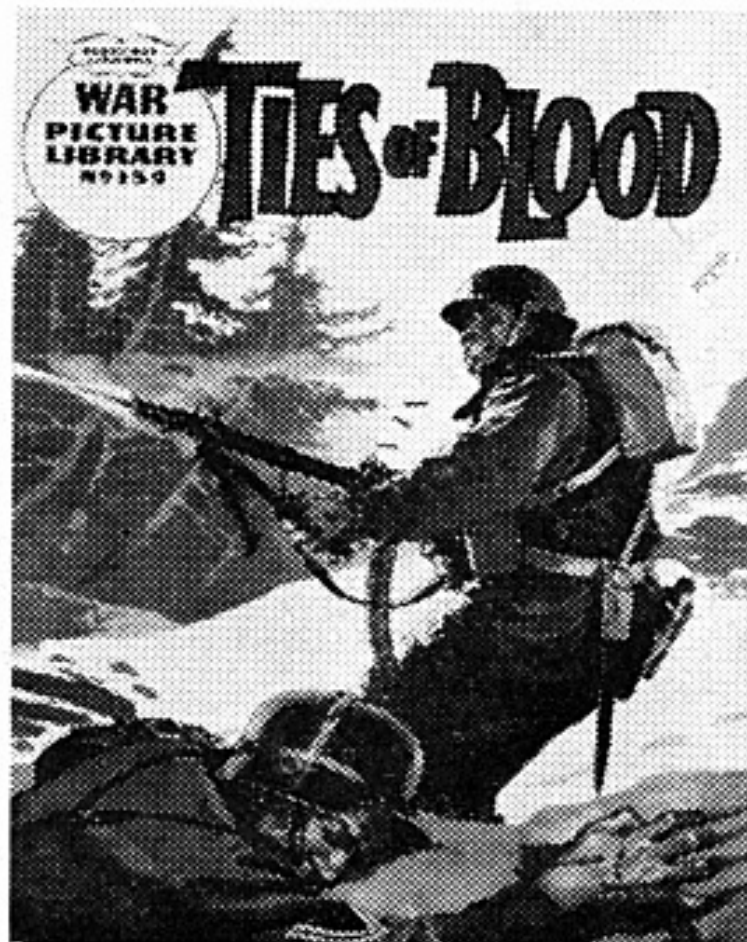
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